

comments from very early on in this pandemic.

This is the way they looked at it: They saw this pandemic as “a tremendous opportunity to structure things to fit our vision.” That was the House Democratic whip. Speaker PELOSI herself put it this way: “This is an opportunity. Every crisis is.” Working families call this pandemic a crisis. They call it a nightmare. But leading Democrats call it “an opportunity.”

Just listen to some of their demands. These are the Democrats’ demands that stood between all of this help and the Americans who need it.

Here is one: Democrats say nobody gets another dime of relief unless State and local governments get about \$1 trillion in extra money. Let me say that again. Democrats are saying nobody gets another dime of relief unless State and local governments get \$1 trillion in extra money.

Let’s put a few facts on the table.

No. 1, State and local governments have spent only about one-fourth of the huge sums we sent them back in the springtime—\$150 billion.

No. 2, the economists who have calculated the likely COVID-related shortfalls for State and local governments have mostly produced estimates that are entire multiples less—entire multiples less—than what Democrats are demanding.

No. 3, in our HEALS Act, Republicans tried to give States and localities extra flexibility around the unspent funds they already had—extra flexibility around the unspent funds they already had. In my State, for example, 94 percent of the money we sent them has not been spent.

We wanted to send huge sums to help with schools, which are one of the States’ biggest expenses. Typically, in a State budget, the two biggest items are education and Medicaid.

But forget all that. Democrats are demanding that we send State and local governments a colossal amount of money, with no relationship to actual need, while they have only spent a quarter—25 percent—of the money they have already gotten.

Clearly, this isn’t about COVID. Democrats think they smell an opening they have wanted for years—to make Uncle Sam bail out decades of mismanagement and broken policies in places like New York, New Jersey, and California. So they have decided that no working family anywhere in America can get another cent—not one cent—unless they get to create a trillion-dollar slush fund for mismanaged States, completely and totally out of proportion to pandemic needs.

Here is another one of those far-left demands: Nobody gets another dime unless we indefinitely pay people more to stay home than to go back to work.

Republicans agree we ought to continue additional Federal jobless benefits during this extraordinary time. Senate Republicans tried several times to stop them from expiring. The Democratic leader blocked us.

Our view, which a majority of Americans share, is simply that it disincentivizes rehiring and reopening to pay people more to stay home. It is a statement of the obvious. It disincentivizes rehiring and reopening to pay people more to stay home.

Plenty of Democrats said they saw the point and were happy to negotiate on this. Speaker PELOSI’s own No. 2, the House majority leader, said: “It is not \$600 or bust.” That was the No. 2 Democrat in the House. The senior Senator from Maryland said: “We certainly understand. We don’t want to have a higher benefit than what someone can make working.” Oh, no. But the Speaker and the Democratic leader overruled them. No deal. No deal unless we pay people more to stay home.

That is not about COVID. It is not about a real reopening. It is about far-left ideology. They preferred for the jobless benefits to go down to zero—zero—unless they could pay people more to stay home.

Does anyone in this country really believe that relief for Americans should be totally contingent on bailing out States for mismanagement that predated the pandemic by decades? Does anyone really think it was better for jobless benefits to completely expire unless we pay people more not to work? And does anyone really think that Congress should walk away from countless subjects where a bipartisan agreement should be possible over these fringe positions? Do Americans think Democrats should walk away from school funding, testing, cash to households, preventing a spike in seniors’ Medicare premiums, legal reform, and more, over this?

I think almost every family in America would answer these questions the same way, but unfortunately Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader have answered them the opposite way. They think they have political leverage over the President of the United States, and so they are willing to personally increase the pain for vulnerable families unless they get their way on matters not related to COVID.

Republicans wanted to agree on the things we could agree to. Democrats said: Our way or the highway.

Republicans wanted to send cash now—right now—for schools, testing, and unemployment benefits and argue over State bailouts later. Democrats said nobody gets a penny unless Texas and Florida bail out New Jersey. That is their position. Nobody gets a penny unless Texas and Florida bail out New Jersey.

So this is where we are. The previous UI benefits expired. The PPP closed its doors.

Over the weekend, President Trump took steps to soften the blow of the Democrats’ hostage tactics on American families who need help most. His decisions will help spare some Americans some of the pain from the Democrats’ hostage-taking.

From the beginning—from the very beginning—our side has tried every-

thing possible to find common ground and deliver more help, but the Democrats have said no. At least the American people know the score. At least they know the score.

HONG KONG

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a totally different matter, this weekend brought more unsettling news in the ongoing struggle for Hong Kong to preserve any shred of its civil liberties and self-governance.

One of the region’s most prominent pro-democracy advocates, Jimmy Lai, was arrested yesterday for alleged violations of the so-called national security law imposed by Beijing.

Last year, after a historic election that saw millions flock to the polls to overwhelmingly reject President Xi’s preferred candidates, the Chinese Communist Party moved quickly to choke Hongkongers’ free expression.

Mr. Lai has been at the vanguard of the vibrant Hong Kong-based media and publishing world.

Jimmy Lai was arrested for an alleged violation of the so-called national security law imposed by Beijing. He has devoted much of his life to advancing precisely—precisely the sort of values that the CCP finds most repulsive: freedom of thought and freedom of speech.

The Senate, the country, and freedom-loving nations across the world stand with Mr. Lai and with all the peaceful demonstrators who have met the business end of the CCP’s repression.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the weekend, the United States

achieved an ignominious milestone. Five million Americans are confirmed to have contracted COVID-19—by far, the most in the world.

Our country went from 4 million Americans having had the disease to 5 million in 17 days—only 17 days. One million Americans were infected in just 17 days. We have lost American businesses, American wealth, and an unbearable number of American lives—a number that will inevitably increase as the number of infections continues to rise.

The brutal economic effect of the pandemic has spared no corner of our country. We are living through the greatest economic crisis since the Depression and the greatest health crisis since the Spanish flu in 1918. So it should not be hard to convince Republicans in the Senate and the White House to provide urgent and necessary relief to the American people.

The \$3.4 billion in the Heroes Act was based on the country's needs, which is so large and so diverse. It is not a political position; it is what our country needs—its schools, its businesses, its renters, its homeowners, its essential workers, its post office, its elections, State and local governments, our healthcare system. Leader McConnell doesn't seem to understand this. He sees everything through a political lens.

But we Democrats are looking at the real needs of people. They are large, and they come from many different places. That is why we called for a large bill because it was needed because the American people demanded it. At this point, the American people are on our side. By survey data, two-thirds support the \$3.4 billion Democratic plan, not the skimpy Republican plan that doesn't deal with people's needs.

But at the end of last week, after days of arduous negotiations, Speaker Pelosi and I continued to run into Republican intransigence. They didn't see people's needs the way we did. They didn't see the depth and breadth of this crisis. So, like in any normal negotiation, we offered to move in their direction if they would move in ours. Let's meet in the middle, we said—in the middle. That is how negotiations occur. That is how you get something done. The White House said no.

It was difficult for us to offer that compromise. The Democratic position is that we want to devote enough resources to defeat the virus and see the American people through this crisis. The Republican position is to give much less than what is needed. Democrats don't want to leave large portions of the country and the economy to fend for itself, but the reason we want to meet in the middle is that getting major legislation through Congress is the only way to achieve something significant for the American people.

Rather than compromise, our Republican counterparts said: "Take a hike." Quite literally, they said virtually this

in the room: No, it is going to be our way or no way. We are not going to meet you in the middle.

Why? Why wouldn't they, when the needs are so great, when there are so many people suffering and so many more who will suffer if we don't act? It is because this Republican Party is so tied in a knot that it can't agree to anything. It can only sputter the same political speech every day.

Republican Leader McConnell has admitted that 20 Republican Senators will not vote for any more relief for the American people. The Senate bill that the Republican leader keeps referring to lacks the support of Senate Republicans. He can't bring it to the floor because so many of them will vote against it.

The President himself called the Republican bill "semi-irrelevant"—one of the few things he said about this crisis that had some truth to it.

It was not some possibility that Democrats blocked. Senate Republicans spiked it the moment it came out. Why? Maybe they thought that these Executive orders would be a way out. They are so tied in a knot they can't legislate or even bring themselves to join us in the middle. They were clinging to the hope that the President could do something on his own through Executive orders, but as we have seen, Executive orders in general aren't going to get the job done, especially the incompetent ones issued over the weekend.

President Trump's recent Executive orders are so unserious, in terms of meeting the large needs of America, as to be pathetic. Take, for example, the payroll tax deferral. It makes no sense. Even Republican Members of Congress and, according to reports some members of the administration, opposed a payroll tax deferral because it would do next to nothing to help our workers or the economy. Remember, the President did not cancel payroll taxes—he can't—he just deferred them. Most employers will continue to withhold the payroll tax so that their employees will not be hit with a very large tax bill in December when the deferral expires. ADP, a nonpolitical payroll processing company, said: It "may take months to implement" the President's new policy.

It feels like forever ago, but Candidate Trump promised he was different from Republicans and would never touch Social Security or Medicare. Well, guess what. Deferring the payroll tax is a backdoor way of weakening Social Security and Medicare. In case the President's intentions weren't clear, he said that after the election he may permanently cut the payroll tax, which would deplete the trust funds and destroy Social Security and Medicare as we know it. If you are a senior or have paid into Social Security or Medicare and are waiting for it, watch out—watch out. Seniors throughout the decades, since we have had Social Security, have jealously regarded the trust fund, and now Donald Trump

says: Well, maybe we should get rid of it because we should defer; we should get rid of the payroll tax altogether.

This Executive order is an example of many false promises that Donald Trump has made and, just as importantly, it is so put together with spit and glue that in all likelihood many States will not implement it at all—some have said so. And many more, even if they want to implement it, will take months—several months—while people will not get their unemployment benefits.

The easiest thing to do for the good of the economy, for keeping millions out of poverty, which the President's pandemic unemployment insurance has done, is simply to renew the existing unemployment insurance. But because of the hard right, because so many Republicans don't want to spend the money, even for people who have lost jobs through no fault of their own, it doesn't happen.

The idea that the American worker is looking for an out is demeaning to the American worker, Leader McConnell. Americans want to work. There is pride in work. The overwhelming majority of Americans, if given the choice of a job or unemployment insurance for a period of time, even if that unemployment insurance is not exactly what they got paid, will take the job. We know that.

America believes in the work ethic. So how demeaning to the American worker to say they are looking for a way out; that they are looking for a way to "skeeve" the system. That is not the American worker I know. That is not the New York worker I know. But, of course, when unemployment is over 10 percent, you can be looking for a job, but you may not get one. That is the reason so many people are on pandemic unemployment insurance.

The President's plan there was nothing short of a disaster in terms of its inability to be implemented, its effect on Social Security and Medicare, and the demeaning way in which it looks at the American worker. The President's Executive orders, therefore, are a disaster.

The President's Executive order on evictions is the best example of all sizzle and no steak. It does not even guarantee a moratorium on evictions. It merely instructs Federal Agencies to "review" and "consider" whether it is appropriate to halt evictions, let alone people who have fallen behind on their rent.

Three of the things the President has done don't work. The deferral of the payroll tax hurts Social Security and does not pump money into the economy. Cutting the unemployment insurance will take weeks and months to implement and hurts American workers and demeans them. The Executive order on evictions says: Let's consider something. We know what that means in jargon around here: Let's not do it. Let's just talk about it.

President Trump's Executive orders are hardly worth the paper they are

printed on. You don't have to take my word for it. Go ask Republican Senators from South Carolina and Nebraska who aren't too thrilled with it either.

Of course, the biggest problem with these Executive orders is not what they do but what they don't and can't do. The orders don't address testing, tracing, and treatment of COVID-19—desperately needed to curb the health crisis which, in turn, is hurting the economy so badly.

The orders leave out money to safely reopen our schools and provide the PPE and other help to keep the kids, teachers, and staff safe. The orders will not give food assistance to hungry kids and families.

The orders will not aid State and local governments, firefighters, sanitation workers, bus drivers, healthcare workers. All the people who keep our communities running could lose their jobs.

The orders leave out funds to ensure elections can be carried out safely amid COVID-19, and the orders do nothing to keep our post offices open and make sure our elections are conducted in a safe and sound manner during this COVID crisis.

The fact is, we are facing an unprecedented crisis. The government is going to have to commit resources to fight this disease and the economic devastation it has wrought. Executive orders cannot do that and, therefore, will always be insufficient, especially those crafted in such a poor way as these.

The only way to crush the virus and truly protect American working families is to pass a comprehensive bill in Congress that is equal to the challenges facing our country. Democrats remain ready to return to the table. We need our Republicans to join us there and meet us halfway and work together to deliver immediate relief to the American people. We are ready as soon as our Republican colleagues have come off this view that it is their way or no way and meet us in the middle.

Now, before I yield the floor, I want to take a step back and talk about the core problem in our negotiations over the past few weeks. President Trump and the Republican Party—certainly in the Senate—are not alive to the suffering of the American people. The response from the White House to the greatest domestic challenge of the 21st century can be summed up in five words issued by President Trump in an interview last week: "It is what it is."

President Trump was challenged to defend his claim that COVID-19 is under control. "How?" he was asked. "A thousand Americans are dying a day." President Trump's response: "It is what it is."

"It is what it is." That is how the President of the United States of America responds to the harrowing fact that more than 1,000 Americans are dying every single day from a virus his administration has failed to contain—not a morsel of empathy, not an

ounce of sorrow, not a shred of remorse for the many mistakes his administration has made. The President says: "It is what it is."

What a shocking admission of Presidential failure. We live in the wealthiest and most powerful Nation on Earth. Yet countries around the world manage to test their citizens, isolate cases, stop the spread of the disease—countries with bigger populations than ours and countries with a mere fraction of our resources and know-how. President Trump's response to this crisis is a national and an international embarrassment. The President says: "It is what it is."

President Trump is not the only one who dismisses the gravity of COVID-19. The lack of empathy and understanding starts at the top, but it goes all the way down. The President's Chief of Staff said COVID-19 isn't such a big deal for schoolchildren compared to the flu. Leader MCCONNELL put the Senate on ice for 4 months in the middle of a global pandemic because his party "didn't feel the urgency of acting"—his words. Now, by the leader's own admission, more than a third of the Senate Republican caucus doesn't want to vote for anything—anything—to help the American people.

The economy is failing. Small businesses are closing. State and local governments are cutting essential services. Americans can't pay the rent and will be thrown out of their homes. Families can't afford to feed their children. Essential workers don't have PPE. We are sending our kids back to school without a plan. The number of Americans we are testing is going down. The disease is ravaging our nursing homes. Americans are dying—so many in so short a time that funeral homes and morgues are storing the dead in refrigerated 18-wheelers.

Yet the President says: "It is what it is." The President, his aides, his party, and Congress are not even awake to what is happening in this country. That is the reason Senate Republicans delayed for 4 long months, and that is the reason we have been unable to find agreement with the White House.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I thank you. I want to thank the minority leader—the Democratic leader, Mr. SCHUMER—for his remarks.

There are not many of us around here in the Senate today. It is pretty quiet. If you walk through the halls, there is virtually nobody around. That is what it was like last Thursday afternoon. That is what it was like here in the Senate on Friday and again on Saturday and again on Sunday. Here we are again on Monday, and this Senate is virtually a ghost town—a few people here, but for the most part, everybody was sent home by the majority leader, by Senator MCCONNELL.

He told Senators: Go home until further notice. Go home. We are going to put the Senate on standby. No need to be here doing the people's business.

Well, the coronavirus is not on standby. The coronavirus is very much alive and well and spreading throughout the country—more severely in some parts than others but spreading throughout the country—and with it has come the spread of economic pain and economic harm. So COVID-19 is not on standby, and neither is the economic pain and fallout that it has caused.

But here in the U.S. Senate, the Republican leader, the majority leader, has said: Go home and be on standby. That is not leadership at any time. It is certainly not the kind of leadership that the American people need and should expect during a global pandemic and recession-era unemployment levels.

So why did the majority leader tell people to just go home and be on standby? It is because he wanted the Trump administration to negotiate an agreement. Last I checked, the U.S. Senate was a separate branch of government with its own responsibilities. Yet we have the Republican leader, who runs the U.S. Senate from the floor, telling people to go home and be on standby because he wants the President of the United States, the Trump administration, to negotiate an agreement and then come back to us. In other words, the Republican leader wants to contract out his responsibilities and the responsibilities of the U.S. Senate to the executive branch.

If you look at the U.S. Constitution, there are three separate branches of government. Yet the Republican leader has decided to give his proxy to the President of the United States, to the executive branch, rather than stay here in the U.S. Senate and do our work.

Now, why is that? Why is it that the majority leader has decided to contract out his responsibilities and those of the Senate to the executive branch of government? Well, we don't have to guess because Mr. MCCONNELL has told us. He told PBS NewsHour: "About 20 of my Members think that we have already done enough." Let me read that again. This is from the Republican leader: "About 20 of my Members think that we have already done enough."

He is obviously referring to Republican Members of the Senate caucus. These are Members of the Senate Republican caucus. They think all is well; we have done enough; we don't need to do any more to expand access to testing, don't need to expand access to personal protective equipment, don't need to do anything to help our schools. We have done enough. We don't need to do anything more on unemployment insurance, where the additional \$600 a week has expired.

Senator MCCONNELL said that 20 of his Members thought they have already done enough. The eviction moratorium is coming to an end, both nationally and in many States, but 20